

Concluding observation Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights E/C.12/IRN/CO/2 para 23

Full recommendation:

The Committee recommends that the State party take immediate steps, inter alia by increasing budgetary allocations, to improve housing and living conditions in regions traditionally inhabited by ethnic minorities, including access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, electricity, transportation facilities, schools and health-care centers.

Assessment using Impact Iran human rights indicators¹

According to Article 31 of the 1979 Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran “Every Iranian individual and family is entitled to a dwelling appropriate to its needs.” The Government is required to provide this, while giving priority to the people who need it the most, in particular peasants and workers. In addition, Article 19 of the Constitution states “All people of Iran, whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, enjoy equal rights; color, race, language, and the like, do not bestow any privilege”. Additionally, Article 20 emphasizes that “All citizens of the country, both men and women, equally enjoy the protection of the law and enjoy all human, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, in conformity with Islamic criteria.” These laws seemingly guarantee access to adequate living conditions for all, including ethnic minorities.

In recent decades, the Iranian government has implemented various plans and programs to reduce the problems associated with providing housing in Iran. But over the years, and with the implementation of many projects and construction, housing-related problems, including the need for affordable housing for all, especially the low-income and vulnerable individuals, many of whom are members of ethnic minorities, still exist. The Housing Foundation and the Imam Khomeini Relief Committee, as the two bodies responsible for providing housing for the low-income and "responsible for organizing and addressing the livelihoods of the poor and needy," signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2016 for the construction of 20,000 units of "supportive housing" in rural areas, yet there is a scarcity of reports that would indicate that this measure has alleviated the affordable housing crisis in Iran.²

In 2007, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad introduced the Mehr housing plan which planned to create 2.2 million new housing opportunities for low income and disadvantaged individuals. By the time

¹ ESCR.11.1.S.3

ESCR.11.1.S.1

ESCR.11.1.P.2 ESCR.11.1.P.1 ESCR.11.1.O.2

² <http://www.jahannews.com/sdcez78nejh8pzi.b9bj.html> and

<https://www.maskanco.ir/Components/News/View/NewsPDF.aspx?id=920&lcid=1033>

Hassan Rouhani came to power, this plan had not been implemented and only around 700 thousand housing units had been built. This housing project was ill-planned as houses were built outside of the main urban areas with lack of access to transportation and basic necessities. In 2019, Hassan Rouhani once again vowed to implement this housing initiative, yet no major progress has been reported in the months since and low-income families are still struggling to find affordable and adequate housing in the midst of heavy sanctions by the United States, which have devalued the Rial greatly.³ Reports indicate that Iranian low-income families still struggle to find housing opportunities that provide the most basic human necessities like sanitation, running water and heat.⁴

Ethnic minority-rich regions in Iran have historically experienced low levels of development due to neglect from the central government in Tehran. In 2015, Sistan and Balouchistan reported 63% of its urban and 76% of its rural population as living under the poverty line. Due to the region's rich oil reserves the government has invested large sums of capital into the exploitation of its resources and such developments have not benefited the Balouch people, which comprise the majority of the population in the region.⁵

In Khuzestan, a region which in 2015 had 32% of its urban and 26% of its rural population living under the poverty line, a high number of Ahwazi Arabs live in informal settlements due to displacement. These settlements are known for the inexistence of the most basic living conditions, such as a functioning sewage system, electricity, medical facilities and even schools.⁶

Due to the precarious situation and low economic development in ethnic minority rich regions, members of ethnic groups such as Balouch, Arabs and Kurds have limited access to education. School facilities are often inadequate to host children due to the various safety and health risks associated with their use.⁷ Additionally, there is a scarcity of schools in these regions forcing students to use transportation to go to school, which not everyone can afford.⁸ Official state

³ Al Jazeera, <https://www.aljazeera.com/ajimpact/iranians-struggle-afford-housing-prices-soar-190730150209889.html>

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ Tasnim News, 'Chabahar national development projects crippled/63% of Chabahar's population are marginalized (Persian),' 19 December 2016. From <https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Rights-Denied-Violations-against-ethnic-and-religious-minorities-in-Iran.pdf>

⁶ Minority Rights Group, <https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Rights-Denied-Violations-against-ethnic-and-religious-minorities-in-Iran.pdf>

⁷ Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), Alternative Report Submitted to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the Consideration of the Second Report of the Islamic Republic of Iran during the 49th Pre-Sessional Working Group, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CESCR/Shared%20Documents/IRN/INT_CESCR_NGO_IRN_14268_E.pdf p. 14.

⁸ Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), Alternative Report Submitted to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for the Consideration of the Second Report of the Islamic Republic of Iran during the 49th Pre-Sessional Working Group, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CESCR/Shared%20Documents/IRN/INT_CESCR_NGO_IRN_14268_E.pdf p. 17.

figures from 2017 showed that 25,000-30,000 children in Sistan and Balouchestan did not receive an education that year, but this number could be closer to 120,000.⁹

Low development levels in regions inhabited by members of ethnic minorities are similarly linked with a lack of accessibility to healthcare services. Regions like Sistan and Balouchistan and Kurdistan have contributed to low levels of life expectancy, when compared to other regions.¹⁰ Air pollution is another significant issue affecting the lives of members of ethnic minorities in these regions, as cities such as Ahvaz, Sanandaj and Kermanshah have been marked as heavily polluted by experts.¹¹

As Iran has not made any significant strides to improve the quality of life in minority areas, including on issues such as housing, healthcare, education and transportation, this recommendation has not been implemented.¹²

Recommendation Status:

This recommendation has **NOT** been implemented.

⁹ Centre for Human Rights in Iran, 'Impoverished children without identification documents deprived of education in Iran,' 22 July 2017. <https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2017/07/impoverished-children-without-identification-documents-deprived-of-education-in-iran/>

¹⁰Minority Rights Group, <https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Rights-Denied-Violations-against-ethnic-and-religious-minorities-in-Iran.pdf>

¹¹ ibid

¹² For more, please see: Minority Rights Group, <https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Rights-Denied-Violations-against-ethnic-and-religious-minorities-in-Iran.pdf>